



CAGE NOIR

Nicolas Cage talks Spider-Man Noir, Ghost Rider and his love of comic books with STACK.

Words Gill Pringle

Longtime comic book fan Nicolas Cage is delighted to be a part of hit animated movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, starring as Spider-Man Noir.

When *STACK* caught up with Cage in Macao, where he is serving as a Talent Ambassador for International Film Festival & Awards Macao, he had yet to see the film but couldn't conceal his thrill over the Spidey buzz.

"Out of the blue, I had a phone call from Sony that they were interested in me to play Spider-Man Noir and I met the directors in downtown LA and they showed me what the movie was gonna look like and I flipped for it.

"I thought it was gonna be beautiful; a real visual feast," recalls the actor who felt he was well prepared to personify Spider-Man Noir.

"I had already done *Dog Eat Dog* with Paul Schrader, where I was playing with a Humphrey Bogart affectation," he says, referring to his role in Schrader's

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2016 crime drama co-starring Willem Dafoe.

"So I thought it would be nice with Spider-Man Noir to think about a 1930s noir film star, a Cagney or a Bogart or an Edward G. Robinson; any of these guys who talked fast or had a certain rhythm to their delivery. So Spider-Man Noir became a mix of all those flavours in terms of the way they spoke and a memory of that, growing up with those movies. That's what was most exciting for me about playing Spider-Man Noir."

If Cage is synonymous with any comic book hero then it would be Superman, naming his son Kal-El after Superman's birth name, and earlier this year voicing Superman in TV's *Teen Titans GO* series.

"Well I only did that because it was my son Kal's favourite show on TV and he got



SPIDER-MAN OZ

When *STACK* caught up with producers Phil Lord and Chris Miller to talk *Into the Spider-Verse*, we simply had to ask if an Aussie Spider-Man was ever considered among the line-up of Spider-People.

"It's funny you should ask," says Lord. "We came very close to having an Australian Spider-Man in the picture. Rodney [Rothman, co-writer] had a pitch that an Australian Spider-Man would show up late in Aunt May's basement and say, 'Hey guys, what did I miss?'"

Miller adds that he got taken out of the story pretty early. "Ultimately, we didn't have room for him in this movie. And they told us we didn't have the money to do it," he laughs.



a chance to play a part as a young Bruce Wayne in it, and it was one line and we went into the studio together and I was playing this cameo of Superman. We loved the experience and I hope he'll make more movies as a voice actor," he says.

In 2002 Cage auctioned his treasured collection of 400 vintage comics for over US\$1.6 million, years later creating his own comic book with eldest son Weston, called 'Voodoo Child'.

In 2007 and 2012 he starred in the titular role of *Ghost Rider* and its sequel, based on the Marvel character, although today he feels his live action comic book days are behind him, happy to make his mark as an animated Spider-Man Noir.

Cage has no regrets that he hasn't become a part of today's Marvel superhero juggernaut.

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"I already played the one which resonates with me personally, which is Ghost Rider. I grew up reading Ghost Rider and The Hulk. I enjoyed them because I couldn't understand how the monsters could look so scary but also be so good.

"But Ghost Rider was always going to be a very hard sell. Its not a character where you could just go, 'Oh by the way son, this superhero sold his soul to the devil but he's also good even though he's in league with

Satan or Lucifer.' It's not a popular concept with the conservative American audiences," he muses.

"But, that being said, for me it was like a fairy tale version of Faust. It would be like as if Walt Disney had made a Faust animated feature; they'd never do that but, to me, it was an important story. It was also very complex; it was almost as if a tattoo had come to life, this flaming skull. It was a very unusual superhero to play and, because of that, I felt like it was the right match for me.

"But it would have been nice to see a Ghost Rider in with the Avengers. I know in the early comic books, he was one of them at one point and he would do guest appearances. But I think my comic book days are over and I'm not really interested in playing any other

super heroes. I'm fine with the cards I was dealt."

If there's one role he still longs to play then it's Captain Nemo in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

"My first love – even before I loved my parents – and I mean this sincerely, was the ocean. From being a very small child of maybe one or two, I was in love with the sea. It was so beautiful, the way it smelled and the colours of the water and the animals that lived in the ocean. And then when I started reading, I fell in love with Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and knew immediately that I could play Captain Nemo. With my love of the ocean, I would smoke seaweed cigarettes, I would play the organ and show off my collection of fish and go diving with my crew. I wouldn't have to act at all and could play it perfectly." **S**

• *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* is out on Mar 27

